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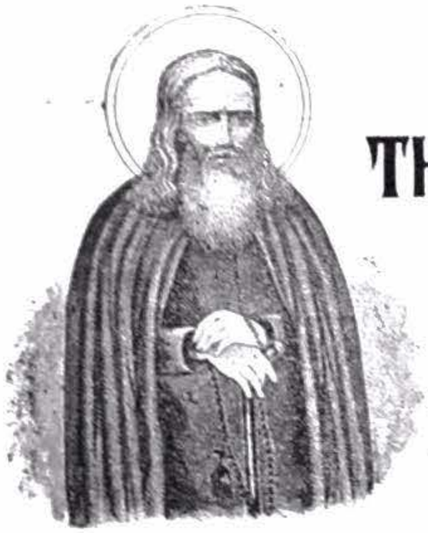

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OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF
SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA

Established with the blessing of His Eminence the late *John (Maximovitch)*, Archbishop of Western America and San Francisco, Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

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COVER: Starets Anatole the Younger near his cell in the Skete of Optina Monastery, around the turn of the century.

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LIFE AFTER DEATH

I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the age to come.
The Nicene Creed

LIMITLESS and without consolation would have been our sorrow for our close ones who are dying, if the Lord had not given us eternal life. Our life would be pointless if it ended with death. What benefit would there then be from virtue and good deeds? Then they would be correct who say: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" But man was created for immortality, and by His Resurrection Christ opened the gates of the Heavenly Kingdom, of eternal blessedness for those who have believed in Him and have lived righteously. Our earthly life is a preparation for the future life, and this preparation ends with our death. *It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment* (Heb. 9:27). Then a man leaves all his earthly cares; the body disintegrates, in order to rise anew at the General Resurrection. But his soul continues to live, and not for an instant does it cease its existence. By many manifestations of the dead it has been given us to know in part what occurs to the soul when it leaves the body. When the vision of its bodily eyes ceases, its spiritual vision begins. Often it begins in the dying even before death, and while still seeing those around them and even speaking with them, they see what others do not see. But when it leaves the body, the soul finds itself among other spirits, good and evil. Usually it inclines toward those which are more akin to it in spirit, and if while still in the body it was under the influence of certain ones, it will remain in dependence upon them when it leaves the body, however unpleasant they may turn out to be upon encountering them.

(*Continued on page* 189)

+ Archbishop John Maximovitch

Archbishop John Maximovitch
San Francisco, California
September, 1965

THE MARTYRDOM OF THE GLORIOUS
NEW MARTYR OF EPIRUS

SAINT ANASTASIOS

TOGETHER WITH THE NARRATION ABOUT
DANIEL OF THE ISHMAELITES

Commemorated on November 18

ANASTASIOS, THE NEW MARTYR of Christ and triumphant athlete of piety, was from Paramythia of Epirus. On a certain day he went with other Christians to the fields, having with him his sister, in order to harvest. It happened on that day that the son of the ruler of the place, being a Moslem, Mousa by name, was passing through with other Hagarenes, having been sent by his father on a certain errand. The impious Hagarenes with lustful eyes seeing the sister of Anastasios, who was beautiful and comely, rushed upon her in order to fulfill their beastly desires. But Anastasios, being quick, put up a fight and gave his sister time to flee.

The Hagarenes having been insulted by this (for with Anastasios there ran the other Christians that were there also and hindered the Moslems, heaping insults upon them), slandered Anastasios, upon whom fell all their fury, to the Pasha. The Pasha in turn having been angered sent soldiers and brought the innocent Anastasios bound, from whom he learned the whole truth. But seeing him young and handsome as well as brave, he wished by whatever way he could, either by flattery and promises, or by threats and tortures, to bring him to Islam. Among other things, the accusers of the athlete said to the ruler that he had supposedly said that he would deny his faith.

Hearing this, Anastasios with great outspokenness and daring and spiritual valor said, "Never did I utter such a thing. I was born a Christian and I shall die a Christian with the help of my Christ. As for the good things which you promise me, I do not care in the least, for I have many good things which are eternal, laid up for me in the heavens, the which cannot be compared with the present." When the blessed Martyr was being questioned there stood by his Moslem slanderers who said to him, "Are you not he who promised then to become a Moslem? Why do you now deny this and do not wish to fulfill what you said?" Anastasios answered, "Neither did I ever say such a word, nor did I ever think such a thing, nor do I deny my holy faith, for

THE HOLY NEW MARTYR ANASTASIOS

TROPARION, TONE 4

THOU DIDST manfully put the error of the impious to shame* by the shedding of thy blood for Christ God* and by thy labors in contest.* Wherefore, as thou hast received the incorruptible crown,* intercede with the Lord,* O Martyr Anastasios,* that we may be delivered from times of peril.

which I am ready to die. All the accusations are slanders and false. I was born a Christian and a Christian shall I die." These things did the Martyr say, and by command of the Pasha he was beaten and thrown into prison.

After a few days there came for a visit to the Pasha one of his friends, who upon hearing about Anastasios, counseled the Pasha what to do, saying, "These Christians are very tough and obstinate and they do not let go of their faith even if one should apply to them the most frightful of tortures, for even death itself they prefer most eagerly for their faith. If, therefore, you wish to convert this youth, do not torture him any more; rather, take him out of the prison and with a kind manner promise him gifts and riches and other favors and in this way mayhap you will be able to convince him." Having heard these things, the Pasha took the Martyr out of prison and began to flatter him and to promise him a multitude of earthly goods. In the end he promised him that he would have him as his own genuine son, if he would listen to him. The above-mentioned friend of the Pasha also aided the cause of the Moslems, adding that he had a most beautiful and good daughter whom he would give as a wife to the Martyr, also promising horses and gold pieces and many other things, if he would only consent to become a Moslem.

The courageous athlete of Christ heard all these vain babblings with horror and disgust and aversion, and with boldness he answered, "I have good things in the heavens, not like your kind, but rather without compare better, more precious, and unending. Therefore, in order not to lose those everlasting good things, I in no way accept your corruptible and empty goods. As for my Faith, I will not deny it under any conditions; may it never be!" Having been left speechless by the Martyr's confession of faith, the Hagarenes put him again in prison in order to think what they would do next.

Seeing and hearing these things, Mousa, the son of the Pasha, having a good volition, pondered most prudently and sensibly upon all the above and began to ask himself, saying, "What then is this faith of the Christians, for which not only all the goods of this world do they reckon as nought, but even every kind of suffering and painful death do they endure on its behalf? Behold this man, even though he is poor, yet he did not choose to gain all the things offered him, which even I who am quite rich did desire, in order not to lose his faith. What then is this faith which the Christians keep with such strictness?"

Wishing to be enlightened, therefore, and to receive clear answers, he succeeded in entering the prison secretly in order to speak with Anastasios. God, on the other hand, seeing the good intention of the youth, showed him the following wonder, in order to fire his salutary desire further. When the

guard of the prison opened the gate for him and he entered, lo, he beheld two shining youths standing near Anastasios whose wondrous brightness was so great that he fell upon his face, being wholly filled with fear. After the Saint made a sign to the shining youths to depart a little, Mousa came closer, and first he asked after them who they were, and learning that they were Angels, the guardians of Christians, he asked again if the Moslems also have such guardians, and why the Christians disdain all the goods of this earth and are not frightened by torments and punishments and death.

To these questions the Martyr answered thus: "All of us Christians have one of these (that is, Angels), who guards us as long as we are in this world, and when we die, he receives our soul and takes it to Paradise; you on your part and the other nations have one for every nation. As to why I disdained the goods offered me by your father, this I did because we have riches in the heavens and everlasting goods which cannot be described, such as if one attempted to compare all the goods and riches of this world they would be found to be nothing but shadows and emptiness." Hearing these things, and having been assured in his soul by the action of Divine grace, the youth fell at the feet of Anastasios and begged him to make him a Christian. The Martyr said to him, "This which you say is not possible at the present time, because should your father ever find out such a thing, he will annihilate all the Christians. For the present believe secretly in the Master Christ and beseech Him to deem you worthy of your desire, and most assuredly the grace of the Lord shall bring to pass all that is to your profit." Having said these things to Mousa, the Martyr showed him how to make the sign of the Cross and then dismissed him in peace.

The accursed father of the God-minded Mousa, taking Anastasios out of the prison, and seeing that neither by violence nor by flattery was he able to convince him to renounce his faith, gave command and they beheaded the Martyr outside the city close by the Monastery that is found there. The sacred body of the blessed and triumphant Martyr remained in that place where he was beheaded because the tyrannical Pasha had threatened lest any Christian dare to come near and take it for burial. During this time the pious would see a light which came down from above and would rest upon the sacred relics of the Martyr. In this way God glorified the right-victorious athlete who at a young and flourishing age died courageously for His love. But at night the Martyr appeared to the Pasha in a dream and ordered him with threats to give his relics to the Monastery that was nearby. The Pasha having been terrified by this, sent word to the monks and they came with lighted candles and incense and received the holy relics with the honor and reverence that

was due them, and having brought them to the Monastery they buried them. After some time when the holy relics were exhumed, they were found to emit an ineffable fragrance and were placed in a case and kept in the sanctuary.

AFTER THE GLORIOUS martyrdom of St. Anastasios, Mousa the son of the Pasha became very sad and gloomy, and bringing to mind all that he had seen and heard close to the Martyr, he began to detest and avoid everything — glories, honors, pleasures and all the other joyous things of the world. Night and day he besought God to have mercy on him and deem him worthy of His grace, and his prayer was answered through the entreaties and intercession of Saint Anastasios in this manner.

At that time the father of Mousa was invited to a wedding by his sister who lived in another region, and he sent Mousa in his stead. Mousa, finding the right time before he departed, went to the grave of the Saint, and falling upon it prayed with tears until the beginning of the midnight service and orthros, at which time he fell into a light sleep, and he saw Anastasios dressed in luminous clothes saying to him, "Do not grieve, brother, but go where you are sent and you shall receive that which you desire." Mousa, having been gladdened by this, departed according to the wish of his father for the wedding, not attending in the least to the vain and corruptible things of this world, but rather being attentive and mentally alert, awaiting the Divine grace which the Lord was quick to send in the following wondrous manner.

While he was sleeping in the appointed room after the wedding, there appeared to him a shining youth saying, "Arise and follow me." Arising barefooted as he was, he followed him who appeared and, behold, the doors of the house opened automatically before them while all were sleeping, and going out together they walked some distance. Coming upon a fountain of water, they found an ascetic resting there and they sat down. Then the shining youth, who was an Angel of the Lord Pantocrator, delivering Mousa to the ascetic said, "Follow after him and he shall guide you to that which you desire." Having said these things to Mousa, the Angel disappeared, whereas Mousa, following after the Elder, reached the Peloponnesos. Finding a certain church in a deserted place, they worshipped there. But the youth by this time had become weak from the labor of the journey and privations, for on the way he was fed insufficiently, eating wild greens and such, and he was in great anxiety. He also was very despondent and downcast, for the enemy began to war against him with the remembrance of his parents and the other delightful and enjoyable things which he had abandoned who now was suffering from total deprivation. Seeing the urgency of the situation, the Elder

told him to enter the church again and to pray. Having reverenced the icon of the Theotokos, he heard a voice coming forth from the icon saying, "Do not grieve, child, for the transient goods which you left behind, for My Son and God suffered many things for the salvation of men. Rather rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for you shall be deemed worthy of many good things in the Kingdom of the Heavens." He likewise heard a voice from the icon of Christ saying the same thing. Mousa, being filled with immeasurable joy from this, forgot all his suffering and hardships and was delivered from the satanic assaults which had besieged him mentally. He then asked the Elder if the Holy Icons always spoke. The Elder answered, "Not always, child, but when there is a need."

Continuing their journey for a few days more, they arrived at Patras, and finding a ship for Venice, the Elder put Mousa on it and sent him to the Orthodox Christians that were there with letters of introduction, giving him also a small miracle-working icon of the Most Holy Mother of God. Reaching Venice, Mousa was received by the Christians and was baptized by them, being given the name Demetrios. After some time, upon hearing about Saint Spyridon, he departed for Corfu, where he entered one of the Koinobic Monasteries and became a monk, being named Daniel. Wishing to be martyred for the Lord, he departed for Constantinople, where there was revealed to him in a marvelous vision the future liberation of the Christians from the Turkish yoke, which he put in writing. But the Greeks who were there hindered him from martyrdom in order that there would not follow disturbances from this and persecution against the Christians, whereupon he was forced to return to Corfu.

The desire for martyrdom, however, did not leave him in peace, and he came to Lacedemonia (Mani), with the intent to go to Constantinople again, but here he remained a little time, and he met and conversed with a certain pious Christian, who narrated everything as he heard it from the mouth of Daniel himself. He also saw in the hands of Daniel the icon of the Theotokos which the Elder-ascetic had given him when he sent him to Venice, and which the Christians had covered with silver. It was to this same brother that Daniel said that he had the longer martyrdom of St. Anastasios with the questions and answers. Elsewhere it is written that from Constantinople Daniel "returned to Corfu and fell asleep in the Lord, having first built a church to the Theotokos, which to this day is called Myrtia, where there is found the martyrdom of St. Anastasios and the vision of Daniel written in his own hand." St. Anastasios was beheaded on the 18th of November in the year 1750. Amen.

CAN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH ENTER

A "Dialogue" with Non-Christian Religions?

II. HINDUISM'S ASSAULT UPON CHRISTIANITY

All the gods of the pagans are demons.
Psalm 95: 5

The following article comes from the experience of a woman who, after attending high school in a Roman Catholic convent, practiced Hinduism for twenty years until finally, by God's grace, she was converted to the Orthodox Faith, finding the end of her search for truth in the Russian Church Outside of Russia. She currently resides in the San Francisco Bay area, and for various reasons prefers to remain anonymous. May her words serve to open the eyes of those Orthodox Christians who might be tempted to follow the blind "liberal" theologians who are now making their appearance even in the Orthodox Church, and whose answer to the assault of neo-paganism upon the Church of Christ is to conduct a "dialogue" with its wizards and join them in worshipping the very gods of the pagans.

1. The Attractions of Hinduism

I WAS JUST sixteen when two events set the course of my life. I came to Dominican Catholic Convent in San Rafael (California) and encountered Christianity for the first time. The same year I also encountered Hinduism in the person of a Hindu monk, a Swami, who was shortly to become my guru or teacher. A battle had begun, but I wasn't to understand this for nearly twenty years.

At the convent I was taught the basic truths of Christianity. Here lie the strength of the humble and a snare to the proud. St. James wrote truly: *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble* (4: 6). And how proud I was; I wouldn't accept original sin and I wouldn't accept hell. And I had many, many arguments against them. One Sister of great charity gave me the key when she said: "Pray for the gift of faith." But already the

Swami's training had taken hold, and I thought it debasing to beg anyone, even God, for anything. But much later, I remembered what she had said. Years later the seed of Christian faith that had been planted in me emerged from an endless sea of despair.

In time the nature of the books that I brought back to school with me, all in plain covered wrappers, was discovered. Books like the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Upanishads*, the *Vedantasara*, the *Ashtavakra Samhita*... In part my secret was out, but nothing much was said. No doubt the Sisters thought it would pass, as indeed most of the intellectual conceits of young girls do. But one bold nun told me the truth. It's a very unpopular truth and one that is rarely heard today. She said that I would go to hell if I died in Hinduism after knowing the truth of Christianity. Saint Peter put it this way: *For by whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave. For if, flying from the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they be again entangled in them and overcome, their latter state is become unto them worse than the former. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them* (II Peter 2: 19-21). How I despised that Sister for her bigotry. But if she were alive today I would thank her with all my heart. What she told me nagged, as truth will, and it was to lead me finally to the fullness of Holy Orthodoxy.

The important thing that I got at the convent was a measuring stick, and one day I would use it to discover Hinduism a fraud.

The situation has changed so much since I was in school. What was an isolated case of Hinduism has developed into an epidemic. Now one must have an intelligent understanding of Hindu dogmatics if one is to prevent young Christians from committing spiritual suicide when they encounter Eastern religions.

The appeal of Hinduism is full spectrum; there are blandishments for every faculty and appeals to every weakness, but particularly to pride. And being very proud, even at sixteen, it was to these that I first fell prey. Original sin, hell, and the problem of pain troubled me. I'd never taken them seriously before I came to the convent. Then, the Swami presented an "intellectually satisfying" alternative for every uncomfortable Christian dogma. Hell was, after all, only a temporary state of the soul brought on by our own bad karma (past actions) in this or in a former life. And, of course, a finite cause couldn't have an infinite effect. Original sin was marvelously transmuted into Original Divinity. This was my birthright, and nothing I could ever do would abrogate this glorious end. I was Divine. I was God: "the Infinite Dreamer, dreaming finite dreams."

There were several ways to clear up the problem of pain in the world. If you were a dualist (i.e., a created being) or a qualified monist (i.e., an apparently created being), you could hold that God had nothing to do with it. Pain was simply the result of wrong thoughts and actions. But if you were a monist (they're called Advaitins or Vedantins) you had a really elegant philosophical system to take care of pain. In a nutshell, pain was maya or illusion. It had no real existence — and what's more, the Advaitin could claim to prove it!

In another area, Hinduism appeals to the very respectable error of assuming that man is perfectable: through education (in their terms, the guru system) and through evolution (or karma and reincarnation). An argument is also made from the standpoint of cultural relativity; this has now assumed such respectability that it's a veritable sin (with those who don't believe in sin) to challenge relativity of any sort. What could be more reasonable, they say, than different nations and peoples worshipping God differently? God, after all, is God, and the variety in modes of worship make for enrichment in religion "writ large."

But perhaps the most generally compelling attraction is pragmatism. The entire philosophical construct of Hinduism is buttressed by the practical religious instructions given to the disciple by his guru. With these practices the disciple is invited to verify the philosophy by his own experience. Nothing has to be accepted on faith. And contrary to popular notions, there aren't any mysteries — just a tremendous amount of esoteric material — so there simply is no need for faith. You are told: "Try it, and see if it works." This pragmatic approach is supremely tempting to the Western mind. It appears so very "scientific." But almost every student falls right into a kind of pragmatic fallacy: i.e., if the practices work (and they do in fact work), he believes that the system is true, and implicitly, that it is good. This, of course, doesn't follow. All that can really be said is: if they work, then they work. But missing this point, you can understand how a little psychic experience gives the poor student a great deal of conviction.

This brings me to the last blandishment that I'll mention, which is "spiritual experiences." These are psychic and/or diabolic in origin. But who among the practioners has any way of distinguishing delusion from true spiritual experience? They have no measuring stick. But don't think that what they see, hear, smell and touch in these experiences are the result of simple mental aberration. They aren't. They are what our Orthodox tradition calls *prelest*. It's an important word, because it refers to the exact condition of a person having Hindu "spiritual experiences." There is no precise equivalent to the

term *prelest* in the English lexicon. It covers the whole range of false spiritual experiences: from simple illusion and beguilement to actual possession. In every case the counterfeit is taken as genuine and the overall effect is an accelerated growth of pride. A warm, comfortable sense of special importance settles over the person in *prelest*, and this compensates for all his austerities and pain.*

In his first Epistle, Saint John warns the early Christians: *Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God...* (4: 1.)

Saint Gregory of Sinai was careful to instruct his monks on the dangers of these experiences: "All around, near to beginners and the self-willed, the demons are wont to spread the nets of thoughts and pernicious fantasies and prepare moats for their downfall..." A monk asked him: "What is a man to do when the demon takes the form of an angel of light?" The Saint replied: "In this case a man needs great power of discernment to discriminate rightly between good and evil. So in your heedlessness, do not be carried away too quickly by what you see, but be weighty (not easy to move) and, carefully testing everything, accept the good and reject the evil. Always you must test and examine, and only afterwards believe. Know that the actions of grace are manifest, and the demon, in spite of his transformations, cannot produce them: namely, meekness, friendliness, humility, hatred of the world, cutting off passions and lust — which are the effects of grace. Works of the demons are: arrogance, conceit, intimidation and all evil. By such actions you will be able to discern whether the light shining in your heart is of God or of satan. Lettuce looks like mustard, and vinegar in color like wine; but when you taste them the palate discerns and defines the difference between each. In the same way the soul, if it has discernment, can discriminate by mental taste the gifts of the Holy Spirit from the fantasies and illusions of satan."

The misguided or proud spiritual aspirant is most vulnerable to *prelest*. And the success and durability of Hinduism depends very largely on this false mysticism. How very appealing it is to drug using young people, who have already been initiated into these kinds of experiences. The last few years have seen the flowering and proliferating of Swamis. They saw their opportunity for fame and wealth in this ready made market. And they took it.

2. *A War of Dogma*

TODAY CHRISTIANITY is taking the thrusts of a foe that is all but invisible to the faithful. And if it can, it will pierce to the heart before declaring its name. The enemy is Hinduism, and the war being waged is a war of dogma.

* Further on *prelest*: see *The Orthodox Word*, 1965, no. 4, pp. 155ff.

When Vedanta Societies were founded in this country, around the turn of the century, first efforts were directed to establishing that there *was no real difference* between Hinduism and Christianity. Not only was there no conflict, but a good Christian would be a better Christian by studying and practicing the Vedanta; he would understand the real Christianity.

In early lectures, the Swamis attempted to show that those ideas which seemed peculiar to Christianity — like the Logos and the Cross — really had their origin in India. And those ideas which seemed peculiar to Hinduism — like rebirth, transmigration of the soul and samadhi (or trance) were also to be found in Christian scripture — when it was properly interpreted.

This kind of bait caught many sincere but misguided Christians. The early push was *against* what might be called "sectarian" dogmas, and *for* a so called scientific religion based on a comparative study of all religions. Primary stress was always on this: there is no such thing as difference. All is One. All differences are just on the surface; they are apparent or relative, not real. All this is clear from published lectures that were delivered in the early 1900s. Today we are in great danger because this effort was so very successful.

Now common parlance has "dogma" a derisive term. But this scorn could not have originated with those who know that it refers to the most precious heritage of the Church. However, once the bad connotation became fixed, the timid, who never like to be associated with the unpopular, began to speak of "rigid dogma," which is redundant but bespeaks disapproval. So the attitude was insidiously absorbed from "broad minded" critics who either didn't know that dogma states what Christianity is, or simply didn't like what Christianity is all about.

The resulting predisposition of many Christians to back down when faced with the accusation of holding to dogma has given the Hindus no small measure of help. And aid from within had strategic advantages.

The incredible fact is that few see that the very power that would overturn Christian dogma is itself nothing but an opposing system of dogmas. The two cannot blend or "enrich" each other because they are wholly antithetical.

If Christians are persuaded to throw out (or what is tactically more clever) to alter their dogmas to suit the demand for a more up-to-date or "universal" Christianity, they have lost everything, because what is valued by Christians and by Hindus is immediately derived from their dogmas. ***And Hindu dogmas are a direct repudiation of Christian dogmas.*** This leads us to a staggering conclusion: ***What Christians believe to be evil, Hindus believe to be good,*** and conversely: ***What Hindus believe to be evil, Christians believe to be good.***

The real struggle lies in this: that the ultimate sin for the Christian, is the ultimate realization of good for the Hindu. Christians have always acknowledged *pride* as the basic sin — the fountainhead of all sin. And Lucifer is the archetype when he says: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will ascend above the clouds; I will be like the Most High." On a lower level, it is pride that turns even man's virtues into sins. But for the Hindu in general, and the Advaitin or Vedantan in particular, the only "sin" is not to believe in yourself and in Humanity as God Himself. In the words of Swami Vivekananda (who was the foremost modern advocate of Vedanta): "You do not yet understand India! We Indians are Man worshippers after all. Our God is Man!" The doctrine of mukti or salvation consists in this: that "Man is to become Divine by realizing the Divine."

From this one can see the dogmas of Hinduism and Christianity standing face to face, each defying the other on the nature of God, the nature of man and the purpose of human existence.

The Communists have seen their opportunity in disseminating this kind of Hindu dogma. On my last trip to India, the Secretary of what is probably the most influential religious organization in India—the Ramakrishna Order of Monks — told me that the Kremlin had asked him to send a Swami to Russia to teach them Advaita Vedanta. And he sent a Swami — with much satisfaction.

The question may be asked: Has atheistic Communism understood at last that the nature of man is such that he must worship something? Apart from the authorized and Communist dominated Orthodox Church in Russia, there is a very substantial underground or catacomb Church. This internally free Orthodox Church is being persecuted just like the early Church under Nero.

Now a God to whom man, the creature, owes his very existence, is clearly a danger to the Communist establishment. But Advaita Vedanta is consistent in every way with their ideology. Let man worship man — and the very base of atheistic Communism is reinforced. Let God assume the form of man or humanity, and there is no longer a question of *religion* competing with Communism. Religion becomes part and parcel of the atheistic structure.

If Advaita Vedanta were successfully promoted in Communist Russia, the advantages would be considerable, both in terms of inner consolidation and by extending their base of friendly rapport with "free thinking" Westerners who have already been affected by Vedantic infiltration into Christianity. Truly, *the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light* (St. Luke 16: 8).

At a symposium of religions held in Chicago in 1969, Father Robert Campbell, a Dominican priest and theologian, said: "I know that the great Swami Vivekananda would himself be in favor of most of the trends in the direction of liberal Christianity; because his teaching was: 'Don't be concerned about doctrines or dogmas or churches or temples' — and the liberal Christian would echo these sentiments 100%."

This priest went on to say: "Swami told us that the old religions said he was an atheist who did not believe in God, but that the new religion tells us that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself and in mankind. Now this attitude will be echoed wholeheartedly by the humanistic, modernistic Christian approach."

You see how great a lie it is to say that dogma doesn't matter. It is dogma alone that provides the basis for Christian values, and it is just *not possible to teach Christianity without teaching dogma.* In a word, it prevents man — full of his own conceits and sloppy thinking — from redesigning the Church in his own image. This Dominican theologian took the "no dogma" bait hook, line and sinker, and unbeknown to himself, he was caught by another religion.

Even those who are concerned by the inroads of the antidogmatists, have scarcely begun to realize the implications of this trend away from dogma. They don't know how completely and quickly the adversary can take them over, making white into black and black into white. Would this priest have spoken so well of Swami Vivekananda's teaching if he had known that the Swami also said: "I love terror for its own sake, despair for its own sake, misery for its own sake. Fight always. Fight on, though always in defeat. That's the ideal. That's the ideal!"?

Surely, you will say, if he had read this diabolical speech or knew what Vivekananda stood for, he could not have endorsed the Swami. But to this I reply: you are innocent of the corrupting power of Hinduism. With all of the basically sound training that I received at the convent, twenty years in Hinduism brought me to the very doors of the love of evil. You see, in India "God" is also worshipped as Evil, in the form of the goddess Kali. But about this I will speak in the next section, on Hindu practices.

This is the end in store when there is no more Christian dogma. I say this from personal experience, because I have worshipped Kali in India and in this country. And She who is Satan is no joke. *If you give up the Living God, the throne is not going to remain empty.* And you give up the Living God by giving up Christianity. And Christian dogma is nothing more and nothing less than a declaration of the truths of Christianity.

One may wonder how this could ever happen. Who gives up good for evil wittingly? There's the rub; it doesn't happen wittingly. It happens in a very ordered, rational, cerebral way.

Hinduism actually consists of a philosophical system (more accurately, six systems), a number of practices, and an enormous mass of esoterica. Hinduism *is* the numberless permutations of these elements. As a result, trying to understand just what Hinduism is, is quite a little like trying to hold on to a greased pig, until you learn the ropes. At base there is a spinal structure in Hinduism, and it is Advaita Vedanta (or monism). This is the Enemy, and it is a seductive one. It is an elegant philosophy, tight and, for the inexpert philosopher, very difficult to crack. The practioners of Advaita Vedanta, however, don't mind moving from their system to another, whenever they're in an intellectual bind. The difficulty is, you have to know their system cold to see what they are doing — and this takes a long time and a lot of study. When you do finally see it clearly, it's a bad joke. The philosophy, the pompous Emperor, is stark naked. The Emperor has no clothes because the Emperor is just another human construct — it isn't religion at all. Philosophy, after all, is only philosophy. And similarly, the psychic experiences that result from the practice of the Vedanta have nothing to do with religion.

3. Hindu Places and Practices

IN 1956 I did field work with headhunters in the Philippines. My interest was in primitive religion — particularly in what is termed an "unacculturated" area — where there had been few missionaries. When I arrived in Ifugao (that's the name of the tribe), I didn't believe in black magic; when I left, I did. An Ifugao priest (a munbaki) named Talupa became my best friend and informant. In time I learned that he was famous for his skill in the black art. He took me to the baki, which is a ceremony of ritualistic magic that occurred almost every night during the harvest season. A dozen or so priests gathered in a hut and the night was spent invoking deities and ancestors, drinking rice wine and making sacrifices to the two small images known as bulol. They were washed in chicken blood, which had been caught in a dish and used to divine the future before it was used on the images. They studied the blood for the size and number of bubbles in it, the time it took to coagulate; also, the color and configuration of the chicken's organs gave them information. Each night I dutifully took notes. But this was just the beginning. I won't elaborate on Ifugao magic; suffice it to say that by the time I left, I had seen such a variety and quantity of supernatural occurrences that any scientific explanation was virtually impossible. If I had been predisposed to believe anything when I arrived, it was that magic had a

wholly natural explanation. Also, let me say that I don't frighten very easily. But the fact is that I left Ifugao because I saw that their rituals not only worked, but they had worked on me — at least twice.

I say all this so that what I say about Hindu practices and places of worship will not seem incredible, the product of a "heated brain."

Eleven years after the Ifugao episode, I made a pilgrimage to the Cave of Amarnath, deep in the Himalayas. Hindu tradition has it the most sacred place of Siva worship, the place where he manifests himself to his devotees and grants boons. It is a long and difficult journey over the Mahaguna, a 14,000 foot pass, and across a glacier; so there was plenty of time to worship him mentally on the way, especially since the boy who led the pack pony didn't speak any English, and I didn't speak any Hindi. This time I was predisposed to believe that the god whom I had worshipped and meditated on for years would graciously manifest himself to me.

The Siva image in the cave is itself a curiosity: an ice image formed by dripping water. It waxes and wanes with the moon. When it is full moon, the natural image reaches the ceiling of the cave — about 15 feet — and by the dark of the moon almost nothing of it remains. And so it waxes and wanes each month. To my knowledge, no one has explained this phenomenon. I approached the cave at an auspicious time, when the image had waxed full. I was soon to worship my god with green coconut, incense, red and white pieces of cloth, nuts, raisins and sugar — all the ritually prescribed items. I entered the cave with tears of devotion. What happened then is hard to describe. The place was vibrant — just like an Ifugao hut with baki in full swing. Stunned to find it a place of inexplicable wrongness, I left retching before the priest could finish making my offering to the great ice image.

The facade of Hinduism had cracked when I entered the Siva Cave, but it was still some time before I broke free. During the interim, I searched for something to support the collapsing edifice, but I found nothing. In retrospect, it seems to me that we often know something is really bad, long before we can really believe it. This applies to Hindu "spiritual practices" quite as much as it does to the so called "holy places."

When a student is initiated by the guru, he is given a Sanskrit mantra, (a personal magic formula) and specific religious practices. These are entirely esoteric and exist in the oral tradition. You won't find them in print and you are very unlikely to learn about them from an initiate, because of the strong negative sanctions which are enforced to protect this secrecy. In effect the guru invites his disciple to prove the philosophy by his own experience. The point is, these practices do in fact work. The student may get powers or "siddhis." These are things like reading minds, power to heal or destroy, to produce

objects, to tell the future and so on — the whole gamut of deadly psychic parlor tricks. But far worse than this, he invariably falls into a state of *prelest,* where he takes delusion for reality. He has "spiritual experiences" of unbounded sweetness and peace. He has visions of deities and of light. (One might recall that Lucifer himself can appear as an angel of light.) By "delusion" I don't mean that he doesn't really experience these things; I mean rather that they are not from God. There is, of course, the philosophical construct that supports every experience, so the practices and the philosophy sustain each other and the system becomes very tight.

Actually, Hinduism is not so much an intellectual pursuit as a system of practices, and these are quite literally — black magic. That is, if you do x, you get y: a simple contract. But the terms are not spelled out and rarely does a student ask where the experiences originate or who is extending him credit — in the form of powers and "beautiful" experiences. It's the classical Faustian situation, but what the practitioner doesn't know is that *the price may well be his immortal soul.*

There's a vast array of practices — practices to suit every temperament. The chosen deity may be with form: a god or goddess; or formless: the Absolute Brahman. The relationship to the chosen Ideal also varies — it may be that of a child, mother, father, friend, beloved, servant or, in the case of Advaita Vedanta, the "relationship" is identity. At the time of initiation the guru gives his disciple a mantra and this determines the path he will follow and the practices he will take up. The guru also dictates how the disciple will live his everyday life. In the Vedanta (or monistic system) single disciples are not to marry; all their powers are to be directed towards success in the practices. Nor is a sincere disciple a meat eater, because meat blunts the keen edge of perception. The guru is literally regarded as God Himself — he is the disciple's Redeemer.

Saint Paul seemed to be addressing himself to this very situation when he wrote: *Now the Spirit manifestly saith, that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their conscience seared, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving by the faithful, and by them that have known the truth* (I Tim. 4: 1-3).

At base, the many "spiritual" exercises derive from only a few root practices. I'll just skim over them.

First, there's idolatry. It may be the worship of an image or a picture, with offerings of light, camphor, incense, water and sweets. The image may be fanned with a yak tail, bathed, dressed and put to bed. This sounds

very childish, but it is prudent not to underestimate the psychic experiences which they can elicit. Vedantic idolatry takes the form of self-worship — either mentally or externally, with all the ritualistic props. A common aphoristic saying in India epitomizes this self-worship. It is *So Ham, So Ham,* or "I am He, I am He."

Then there's Japa, or the repetition of the Sanskrit mantra given to the disciple at his initiation. In effect, it's the chanting of a magic formula.

Pranayama consists in breathing exercises used in conjunction with Japa. There are other practices which are peculiar to the Tantra or worship of God as Mother, the female principle, power, energy, the principle of evolution and action. They're referred to as the five Ms. They're overtly evil and rather sick-making, so I won't describe them. But they, too, have found their way to this country. Swami Vivekananda prescribed this brand of Hinduism along with the Vedanta. He said: "I worship the Terrible! It is a mistake to hold that with all men pleasure is the motive. Quite as many are born to seek after pain. Let us worship the Terror for Its own sake. How few have dared to worship Death, or Kali! Let us worship Death!" Again, the Swami's words on the goddess Kali: "There are some who scoff at the existence of Kali. Yet today She is out there amongst the people. They are frantic with fear, and the soldiery have been called to deal out death. Who can say that God does not manifest Himself as Evil as well as Good? But only the Hindu dares worship Him as the Evil."*

* *Editors' note*: Few, even of those most desirous of entering into 'dialogue' with Eastern religions and of expressing their basic religious unity with them, have any at all precise conception of the pagan religious practices and beliefs from whose tyranny the blessed and light yoke of Christ has liberated mankind. The goddess Kali, one of the most popular of Hindu deities, is most commonly depicted in the midst of a riot of blood and carnage, skulls and severed heads hanging from her neck, her tongue grotesquely protruding from her mouth thirsting for more blood; she is appeased in Hindu temples by bloody offerings of goats (Swami Vivekananda justifies this: "Why not a little blood to complete the picture?"). Of her Swami Vivekananda, as recorded by his disciple 'Sister Nivedita,' said further: "I believe that she guides me in every little thing that I do, and does with me what she will," and at every step he was conscious of her presence as if she were a person in the room with him. He invoked her: "Come, O Mother, come! for Terror is thy name," and it was his religious ideal "to become one with the Terrible forevermore." Is this, as Metropolitan Georges Khodre tries to persuade us, to be accepted as an example of the "authentically spiritual life of the unbaptized," a part of the spiritual "riches" which we are to take from the non-Christian religions? Or is it not rather a proof of the Psalmist's words: *The gods of the pagans are demons?*

The great pity is that this one-pointed practice of evil is carried on in the firm conviction that it's good, And the salvation that is vainly sought through arduous self-effort in Hinduism can only be wrought by God through Christian self-effacement.

4. Evangelizing the West

IN 1893 AN UNKNOWN Hindu monk arrived at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. He was Swami Vivekananda, whom I have mentioned already. He made a stunning impression on those who heard him, both by his appearance — beturbaned and robed in orange and crimson — and by what he said. He was immediately lionized by high society in Boston and New York. Philosophers at Harvard were mightily impressed. And it wasn't long until he had gathered a hard core of disciples who supported him and his grandiose dream: the evangelizing of the Western world by Hinduism, and more particularly, by Vedantic (or monistic) Hinduism. Vedanta Societies were established in the large cities of this country and in Europe. But these centers were only a part of his work. More important was *introducing Vedantic ideas into the bloodstream of academic thinking.* Dissemination was the goal. It mattered little to Vivekananda whether credit was given to Hinduism or not, so long as the message of Vedanta reached everyone. On many occasions he said: Knock on every door. Tell everyone he is Divine.

Today parts of his message are carried in paperbacks that you can find in any bookstore — books by Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, Somerset Maugham, Teilhard de Chardin, and even Thomas Merton.

Thomas Merton, of course, constitutes a special threat to Christians, because he presents himself as a contemplative Christian monk, and his work has already affected the vitals of Roman Catholicism, its monasticism. Shortly before his death, Father Merton wrote an appreciative introduction to a new translation of the *Bhagavad Gita,* which is the spiritual manual or "Bible" of all Hindus, and one of the foundation blocks of monism or Advaita Vedanta. The *Gita,* it must be remembered, opposes almost every important teaching of Christianity. His book on the *Zen Masters,* published posthumously, is also noteworthy, because the entire work is based on a treacherous mistake: the assumption that all the so-called "mystical experiences" in every religion are true. He should have known better. The warnings against this are loud and clear, both in Holy Scripture and in the Holy Fathers.

Today I know of one Catholic monastery in California where cloistered monks are experimenting with Hindu religious practices. They were trained by an Indian who became a Catholic priest. Unless the ground had been pre-

pared, I think this sort of thing couldn't be happening. But, after all, this was the purpose of Vivekananda's coming to the West: to prepare the ground.

Vivekananda's message of Vedanta is simple enough. It looks like more than it is because of its trappings: some dazzling Sanskrit jargon, and a very intricate philosophical structure. The message is essentially this: All religions are true, but Vedanta is the ultimate truth. Differences are only a matter of "levels of truth." In Vivekananda's words: "Man is not travelling from error to truth, but climbing up from truth to truth, from truth that is lower to truth that is higher. The matter of today is the spirit of the future. The worm of today — the God of tomorrow." The Vedanta rests on this: that man is God. So it is for man to work out his own salvation. Vivekananda put it this way: "Who can help the Infinite? Even the hand that comes to you through the darkness will have to be your own."

Vivekananda was canny enough to know that straight Vedanta would be too much for Christians to follow, right off the bat. But "levels of truth" provided a nice bridge to perfect ecumenism — where there is no conflict because everyone is right. In the Swami's words: "If one religion be true, then all the others also must be true. Thus the Hindu faith is yours as much as mine. We Hindus do not merely tolerate, we unite ourselves with every religion, praying in the mosque of the Mohammedan, worshiping before the fire of the Zoroastrian, and kneeling to the cross of the Christian. We know that all religions alike, from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, are but so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the Infinite. So we gather all these flowers and, binding them together with the cords of love, make them into a wonderful bouquet of worship."

Still, all religions were only steps to the ultimate religion, which was Advaita Vedanta. He had a special contempt for Christianity, which at best was a "low truth" — a dualistic truth. In private conversation he said that only a coward would turn the other cheek. But whatever he said about other religions, he always returned to the necessity of Advaita Vedanta. "Art, science, and religion," he said, "are but three different ways of expressing a single truth. But in order to understand this we must have the theory of Advaita."

The appeal to today's youth is unmistakable. Vedanta declares the perfect freedom of every soul to be itself. It denies all distinction between sacred and secular: they are only different ways of expressing the single truth. And the sole purpose of religion is to provide for the needs of different temperaments: a god and a practice to suit everyone. In a word, religion is "doing your own thing."

(*Continued on page* 174)

The Counsels of the Elder Nazarius

VI

ON REMAINING IN ONE'S CELL AND ON LEAVING IT

GUARD YOURSELF diligently also in this: Do not leave your cell before the proper time, except for some essential need: in order to listen to your neighbor for the sake of love, or in order to serve the infirm, or if you are sent somewhere on a deed of love by the abbot or your neighbor, or to your spiritual father who instructs you according to God — in these cases, go.

Observe diligently this also: If you go out of your cell for the reasons indicated, which have a blessing, then strive while going as much as possible not to glance anywhere to the side, and lest your eyes become curious about anything.

But if on the way you unexpectedly meet someone, or you see something harmful, or you see certain ones conversing among themselves at the wrong time — then guard yourself from standing or sitting with them; even guard yourself from the thought of whether you should stand with them and listen to what they say; but bow to them in silence and go by them on your own errand. And if they shall say something to you or shall stop you, then again bow to them saying: Forgive me, I am on an errand and I must hurry to fulfill my obedience; and hasten on your errand or to whoever sent you. Reflect on these words: *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners* (Ps. 1:1).

Having come to him to whom you were sent, likewise strive as well as possible not to say anything superfluous, nor to sit without need; but having fulfilled what was entrusted to you, return quickly to your cell with a peaceful spirit.

Watch yourself as well as you can in this also: If there begin to whisper in your ear, like the serpent to Eve, thoughts of pride or judgment against

your neighbor or vainglory, do not be senseless to the intention of that soul-harming deceiver. Unfailingly he will rise up against you with thoughts of conceit, trying to persuade you that everyone is doing things wrongly and only you are doing everything correctly and well. Guard yourself as well as you can from falling into this. Strive not to allow into your mind thoughts of judging your neighbor. The tempter will not cease to present to you such thoughts in order to cause you to praise yourself, saying in your mind: How well I did this or that! I did not stand with those who were talking idly, or I did not do this or that; now I have fulfilled the commandment of Christ. Guard yourself as well as possible so as not to receive into your heart and soul thoughts of self-justification and self-praise; for in them a soul-destroying evil is concealed. Quietly, quickly, unnoticeably, into the soul and heart, as if by small and fine cracks, even sometimes by means of completely unsuspected thoughts, there enter, settling in and penetrating to the very depths of the heart, the passions of disdain and judgment of one's neighbor, vainglory, conceit, and pride, and others like these. In order firmly to prevent their entry into your soul, you must with your whole heart and soul present yourself as a total stranger, a fool, as one unwise, incapable of thought, and possessing nothing. Begin to scold and judge yourself with your whole soul by the following thoughts: What shall I begin to do and what can I say, a senseless wanderer, a criminal before God, clay, a worm? Not only am I unworthy to say anything to a man, but I am unworthy even to hear anything from men; I am against God, lazy and careless concerning the work of God, full of every kind of impurity. Can I draw near to those whom God, the Seer of hearts, finds worthy, having mercy on and preserving them, and against whom I the unrepentant have dared to rise up with offending thoughts? If I begin to speak with them, and God reveals to them my unclean thoughts and feelings, then with justice they will chase me away like a stinking dog. Take such a reflection and an estrangement as your rule, so that you may remove yourself from vain human conversations; and guard yourself against laughter, judgment, blasphemy, harmful idle talk, soul-destroying vainglory and highmindedness.

Be very careful also in case the thought should come to eat something or to go to anyone's cell on your own will. Sometimes the tempter incites you to think that for this you have a need that can be blessed, when in reality there is no such thing; in such a case guard yourself as well as you can against leaving your cell; strive to vanquish this cunning thought. But if after dispassionate reflection you fully recognize that you have a need that can be blessed for going out, such as to visit the sick or some other need as set forth above —then go, observing what was said above. And when you are already setting

out to go to someone, observe this rule: say to yourself on the way to his cell — I am going to so-and-so's; but do I, unrepentant one, dare to disturb a holy man who is occupied in thoughts of God, in prayer, and who remains in holy silence? And here present before your own eyes your sins and say to yourself, not with your lips but with your soul and heart: If I enter the cell and the father or brother sees me, unclean one, will he bear my uncleanness? Will he not begin to scold me and chase me out of his cell like a stinking dog? Will he not say from a disturbed soul: Why have you come to disturb my holy occupation and to defile my cell? Leave, you who are careless about your own soul! And if such a thing happens to me, will I be able patiently to bear the accusation with thanksgiving? Prepare yourself, unrepentant one, for patience, so as not to receive rather shame through impatience, and so as not to cause offense to a holy man.

You should reflect thus, and do it not as one merely playing with thoughts; but, acknowledging your inner uncleanness and unworthiness, you should truly abase yourself with your whole heart and soul. Act in this way and make this your rule. For if you shall reflect thus and humble your soul with self-accusation and acknowledgment of your sins, then you shall go from strength to strength by God's grace, and Christ Who raises up the humble will not leave you, but will visit your soul with spiritual joy and inexpressible sweetness. Only do all these things as set forth above, with your whole heart and soul and mind. For the Sweetest Jesus loves those who labor with humble wisdom, and those who desire with heartfelt and fervent love a perfect correction, and He desires all of us to come to knowledge of the truth.

In such a holy reflection you should remain wherever you may happen to be — in your cell, or on an obedience until the very Divine Liturgy, or on some other service for the Church.

VII

ON THE LITURGY AND PARTAKING OF THE DIVINE MYSTERIES

HAVING COME to the time of the Divine Liturgy, hasten to be there if possible at its beginning, and enter the church with exaltation and with fervent love. Take your place and do everything as was said above concerning morning worship.

Stand with fear and trembling, picturing in your mind and soul and heart the Son of God, Who for your lawless deeds was killed and offered in sacrifice for the salvation of all who believe in Him.

And if you have the intention to partake of the Divine Mysteries, with the permission of your spiritual father, before this spend a week in true fast-

ing, that is, in special abstinence from abundant and pleasing food and drink, in accordance with a given rule and according to your strength. Try to keep yourself in watchfulness, in love toward God and in diligent prayer, with contrition of heart, groaning, lamentation, heartfelt sighing and tears. Know that the defilements of soul and body are cleansed by nothing so much as by tears, contrition of heart, heartfelt groans and sighing. At the same time you should reflect on this also: You are of course indignant at Judas the betrayer and likewise at those who crucified Christ and pierced Him with nails and spear; but pay heed to yourself as well, lest you, too, be guilty as a betrayer of the Body and Blood of Christ. Judas betrayed Christ once; but do you not betray Him many times when you are unfaithful to His word and His commandments? He suffered wounds from His crucifiers once; but do you not give Him wounds many times by your very passions and sins which are displeasing to God? For he bore suffering for every sin of ours.

Enter within yourself with your soul, heart and thought: do you not see within yourself an abyss of passions and sins — blasphemy, theft, gluttony, sensuality, drunkennes, envy, cunningness, deceit, hatred of your brother, rancor, evil speech, judgment of your neighbor, slander, lack of love, unkindness, pride, wrath, anger and every impurity? Having such baseness within yourself, will you not be careless over your soul, careless in cleansing yourself by most zealous and fervent prayer and other God-pleasing works and true repentance?

Strive as well as you can, by heartfelt contrition, sighs and frequent tears, to wash away the filth of your soul and body. Be careful lest you receive the Holy of Holies with your unpurified soul as judgment to yourself. Pay diligent heed lest you unite yourself to those who crucified and killed Christ, lest you become like to Judas the betrayer. Behold what you are eating: what is this food? Is it not God Himself that you receive? What are you being fed? Is it not true manna come down from heaven, so that you may live forever?

Understand that you are partaking of the unspeakable Mystery of mysteries, the Sweetness of all sweetnesses, and the Holy of all holies, from which you yourself become holy. And for this you must unfailingly have within yourself great and firm faith, and you must separate yourself completely from all faults, and make your soul and body pure and as holy as possible; for you are preparing an entrance for the Holy within you. Behold, with what inconceivable honor you are honored when you partake of this Divine Mystery. The most pure Angels are invisibly present, tremble, and cannot behold from terror, while you, of clay and full of every uncleanness, partake

of this; you, with your passions and sins an enemy of Christ God, are united to the Divine and Holy and become one body and one flesh with Christ, as He Himself says: *He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him* (St. John 6: 56).

Oh, lover of virtue! Examine diligently, I beg you: Whom do you dare to receive within you? It is the Most Holy God Himself. With Whom do you wish to be in a single union? With Him Who created us. Be fearful and tremble; for most Divine fire touches your lips, which are full of idle words, foul words and every uncleanness; take care lest it burn you, unworthy one. What is it, with which your tongue, which has spoken so much that is evil and unjust, desires to be refreshed? With the blood of the Terrible Judge! Be fearful lest you fall under His just judgment.

O inconceivable God! Who can express Thy might? Who can worthily praise Thee? Who can fathom the abyss of Thy mercy?

Reflect, O brother: For this sacred food and drink, which are the Body and Blood of Christ, all our forefathers from the first-created Adam, and all the prophets hungered and thirsted, but did not receive them; but you, so distant from them by your unworthiness, partake of this Divine meal. Thank God for His unspeakable mercy, that He makes you worthy of this. And at the same time understand this also: that even if you had or shall have the purity of angels or the holiness and sanctity of St. John the Baptist — even then, without the special mercy of God, you could not be worthy of this Divine Mystery. And if someone think to himself: I am a priest and therefore worthy; then on the contrary, he would be unworthy to serve as a priest. For as it was in the womb of the Most Holy Virgin, so here on the altar by the good will of the Almighty God and the action of the Holy Spirit, there are the Body and Blood of Christ. Behold how this is above nature, conception and human reason; and therefore no one can worthily partake, save for he who in profound humility believes and has steadfast hope in the Lord.

Behold what Christ the Saviour says with His most pure lips: *This is My Body,* He says; not the image of a body do I give, but My Body, under the appearance of bread; take and *eat* unto the remission of sins. *This is My Blood,* not an image of blood, but My Blood, under the appearance of wine; *drink... unto remission of sins* (St. Matt. 26: 26, 27, 28). Wherefore you, too, must diligently examine with what fear, trembling and true humility, self-abasement and heartfelt contrition, sighs and tears, with what fervent love, undoubting faith and hope, reverence and joy and great thanksgiving from your whole heart and soul, you must approach this Divine communion. You must unfailingly approach according to this instruction, namely: ap-

proaching the holy altar,picture to yourself that in actuality you have become worthy to be at the Last Supper together with Christ and the holy Apostles.

When the holy doors are opened and you hear: *with the fear of God...,* fall down in terror before the Almighty God and Judge; and strive as well as possible not to let out of your thoughts what has been said above, but picture it all to yourself and reflect on it. With your arms folded in the form of a cross and pressed to your breast, bend your head a little, have a reverent look, your eyes filled with tears, and recite the prayer: *I believe, O Lord, and confess that Thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. And I believe that this is Thy Pure Body and Thy own Precious Blood. Therefore, I pray Thee, have mercy on me and forgive my transgressions, voluntary and involuntary, in word and deed, known and unknown. And grant that I may partake of Thy Holy Mysteries without condemnation, for the remission of sins and for life eternal. Of Thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant; for I will not speak of the Mystery to Thy enemies; I will not give Thee a kiss like Judas; but like the thief do I confess Thee: Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom. May the communion of Thy Holy Mysteries be to me not for judgment or condemnation, O Lord, but for healing of soul and body. Amen.* Recite it with your whole soul with sighing, with fear and trembling, and heartfelt contrition. Stand trembling and reflect, lest you eat the Lord's Flesh and drink His Blood unto judgment. Beg the most merciful God that at least in this moment He might visit you with His Grace, that you might have contrition and warm feeling and shed fervent tears.

And after reciting this prayer with fervor, make a prostration to the very ground; again beg the All-Merciful God that He might make you worthy without sin to partake of this most Divine Mystery; and thus reflecting, gaze steadfastly and with feeling at the holy Chalice and pray that the Divine Fire might not burn you, but might heal your soul and body upon receiving It. Hope and believe that It will consume all sinful thorns which grow in you, if you will do and feel as here indicated. Then, as soon as you see the priest's hand stretched out with the Holy Sacrament and touching your lips, do not think that you are receiving this Divine gift from a priest's hand, but picture and believe with your whole soul that you receive it from the hand of Christ Himself, Who stands invisibly and places it within your mouth. Picture and believe unfailingly that you are now eating precisely the very flesh of the Lord, which has been taken from the living and life-giving composition of His body, and that now you are drinking the flowing blood and water from the very side of Christ; that you see Christ hanging on the Cross and now from His wounds you are sucking blood and light and life. Thus receive

communion — thus believe unfailingly; thus picture ceaselessly in your mind.

I advise you to memorize the prayer of St. Dimitry of Rostov, which is profitable at the time of communion, and whose words follow. Approaching with such thoughts and feelings, say within your mind: "Open, O doors and bolts of my heart, that Christ the King of Glory may enter! Enter, O my Light, and enlighten my darkness; enter, O my Life, and resurrect my deadness; enter, O my Physician, and heal my wounds; enter, O Divine Fire, and burn up the thorns of my sins; ignite my inward parts and my heart with the flame of Thy love; enter, O my King, and destroy in me the kingdom of sin; sit on the throne of my heart and reign in me alone, O Thou, my King and Lord." With such good thoughts partake of the Divine Mysteries.

At the same time do not forget frequent sighings and contrition; unceasingly weep, lament, accuse yourself that you are entirely unworthy, that you have not yet divested yourself of the flesh and the world, and have not yet mortified yourself of bodily passions, but are full of impure desires and improper movements of the soul, are slothful toward spiritual labor, are downcast and negligent and cold toward attending to the word of God; that you are the most insignificant and miserable and unclean and unworthy vessel for the reception of the Source of life, Whom the heavens of heavens cannot embrace.

Reflect that it is not an Angel that you receive in the holy Mysteries, but the Lord of Angels and the Judge of all. Reflect also on this: with what joy the holy Forerunner leapt in his mother's womb and bowed down to his Master; and how the shepherds, and the kings with gifts, and Simeon and Anna glorified their Master and bowed down to Him with wonder, fear and joy; how also the other saints and all monk-saints with reverence, joy and thanksgiving, shone like the sun when united in communion with the Body and Blood of Christ, and live with Him forever. With just such a desire and great zeal, do you also hasten to the Sweetest Source of benefactions, and thank the Lord for His unspeakable mercy, that He, the terrible and inaccessible God, does not abhor our miserableness, but unites Himself to us, out of His incalculable love for us.

With all your strength you must thank the Lord, not only in word and thought, but also in deed. Strive as much as possible to preserve yourself from much speaking; have God as your pure and holy occupation; and remain in reverence not only before communion, but after receiving this Sacrament as well, preserve yourself from every evil thing. Strive always to remain with Christ your King and God, and do not separate Him from yourself.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, enter your cell in silence of tongue, mind, and every sense; remain in prayer and thanksgiving. Observe at this time also everything that was given you above to be observed after morning worship.

(*Continued from page* 166)

All this may sound far-fetched; but Vivekananda did an effective job. Now I'll show how successful he was in introducing these Hindu ideas into Roman Catholicism, where his success has been the most striking.

Swami Vivekananda first came to America to represent Hinduism at the 1893 Parliament of Religions. 1968 was the 75th anniversary of this event, and at that time a Symposium of Religions was held under the auspices of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago. Roman Catholicism was represented by a Dominican theologian from De Paul University, Father Robert Campbell. Swami Bhashyananda opened the meeting with the reading of good-will messages from three very important people. The second was from an American Cardinal.

Father Campbell began the afternoon session with a talk on the conflict of the traditionalist versus the modernist in modern Catholicism. He said: "In my own university, surveys taken of Catholic student attitudes show a great swing towards the liberal views within the last five or six years. I know that the great Swami Vivekananda would himself be in favor of most of the trends in the direction of liberal Christianity." What Father Campbell apparently didn't know was that the modernistic doctrines he described were *not Christian at all*; they were pure and simple Vedanta.

So there will be no question of misinterpretation, I shall quote the Father's words on the modernists' interpretation of five issues, just as they appeared in three international journals: the *Prabuddha Bharata* published in Calcutta, the *Vedanta Kesheri* published in Madras, and *Vedanta and the West,* published in London.

On doctrines: "Truth is a relative thing, these doctrines and dogmas (i.e., the nature of God, how man should live, and the after-life) are not fixed things, they change, and we are coming to the point where we deny some things that we formerly affirmed as sacred truths."

On God: "Jesus is divine, true, but any one of us can be divine. As a matter of fact, on many points, I think you will find the liberal Christian outlook is moving in the direction of the East in much of its philosophy—both in its concept of an impersonal God and in the concept that we are all divine."

On Original Sin: "This concept is very offensive to liberal Christianity, which holds that man is perfectable by training and proper education."

On the world: "...The liberal affirms that it can be improved and that we should devote ourselves to building a more humane society instead of pining to to go to heaven."

On other religions: "The liberal group says: 'Don't worry about the old-fashioned things such as seeking converts, etc., but let us develop better relations with other religions."

So says Father Campbell for the modernistic Catholics. The modernist has been led like a child by the generous offer of higher truth, deeper philosophy and greater sublimity — which can be had by merely *subordinating the living Christ to modern man.*

Sifting through this shambles of modernistic thinking we find something rather interesting, yet entirely predictable. The whole traditional structure has been razed, but here and there pieces and parts have been reshaped and reused to build a religion in the image of natural man. It's grotesque, but it's growing more and more popular, because the modernist uses the same base as Communism, humanism, evolutionism — and the hero of evolutionism: *Teilhard de Chardin*. These religions of the perfectability of natural man and the world all require one thing: *the annihilation of original sin.* If natural man is basically corrupt, there is no sense in talking about the perfectability of man. And clearly, Utopia building will not be successful if man is basically corrupt. But remove this keystone and everything becomes possible. Remove original sin and Holy Scripture is either false or mythological or symbolical. The entire foundation of Christianity becomes a farce, especially the crucifixion of Christ for the sins of mankind. Then the humanists can speak of Jesus, the ethics teacher, and of the crucifixion as another example of man's inhumanity to man. Political ideologies can fight over the best way to make this world perfect. And Teilhard de Chardin can meditate on the spiritual evolution of man towards the Omega Point.

In effect, the modernist Catholics have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage. They look to a coming age of perfect man and perfect world. But if they were to look to the Holy Scripture they have just rejected, they might be appalled to discover that with their views they themselves are fulfilling prophecy from the second epistle of Saint Peter (2: 1-2): "*...There shall be among you lying teachers, who shall bring in sects of perdition, and deny the Lord Who bought them; bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their riotousness, through whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.*

Here, then, we see the spectacular success of Hinduism, or Swami Vivekananda, or the power behind Vivekananda. It's made a clean sweep of Roman Catholicism. Her watchdogs have taken the thief as the friend of the master, and the house is made desolate before their eyes. The thief said: "Let us have interfaith understanding," and he was through the gate. And the ex-

pedient was so simple. The Christian Hindus (the Swamis) had only to recite the *Vedanta philosophy using Christian terms*. But the Hindu Christians (the modernistic Catholics), had to extrapolate their religion to include Hinduism. Then necessarily, truth became error, and error, truth. Alas, some would now drag the Orthodox Church into this desolate house. But let the modernists remember the words of Isaiah: *Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!* (Is. 5: 20-21.)

5. *The Goal of Hinduism: The Universal Religion*

I WAS AMAZED to see the inroads that Hinduism had made during my absence from Christianity. It may seem odd that I discovered these changes all at once. This was because my guru held dominion over my every action and all this time I was, quite literally, "cloistered," even in the world. The Swami's severe injunctions kept me from reading any Christian books or speaking with Christians. For all their pretentious talk that all religions are true, the Swamis know that Christ is their nemesis. Above all, the Swami was afraid of the Holy Eucharist. So for twenty years I was totally immersed in the study of oriental philosophy and in the practice of its disciplines. I was ordered by my guru to get a degree in philosophy and anthropology, but these were only avocations that filled time between the important parts of my life: time with Swami and time with the teachings and practices of Vedanta.

Today I find Christianity locked in battle with its traditional enemies: the World, the Flesh and the Devil, all in modern dress. The World is not difficult to spot because it fights, to a large extent, under the banner of a well-known enemy: Communism. But for all its obviousness, the World has made substantial gains. It has replaced real good with the seeming goods of humanism, social action, individual "creativity," rebellion, ugly art, folk masses, situational ethics and the like.

Given a little encouragement from the World and the Devil, the Flesh comes right along, operating very successfully on nothing more than natural man. It is, in effect, the enemy within. And it has won devasting victories: broken vows, "comfortable" discipline, immodesty and "sensitivity" training.

But it is the third enemy, the Devil, that is the most treacherous. It is the one that I finally recognized in Hinduism. It is subtle, and all but transparent. It manifests itself primarily in heresy and in confusion. But it has won victories in adjacent territories as well. It has introduced scientism into reli-

gion and discredited the Mysteries, upgrading their symbolism and downgrading their literal truth. It has given new glamor to self-will and personality culture. It attempts to replace old practices with new. But the real thrust of this Adversary is against Christian dogma. *The real victory is heresy.*

Swami Vivekananda's mission has been fulfilled in many particulars, but one piece is yet to be accomplished. This is the establishing of a Universal Religion. In this rests the ultimate victory of the Devil. Because the Universal Religion may not contain any "individualistic, sectarian" ideas, it will have nothing in common with Christianity, except in its semantics. The World and the Flesh may be fires in the stove and the chimney, but the Universal Religion will be a total conflagration of Christianity. The point of all this is that the Jesuit priest Teilhard de Chardin has already laid the foundation for a "New Christianity," and *it is precisely to Swami Vivekananda's specifications for this Universal Religion.*

Teilhard de Chardin is an anomaly because, unlike traditional Roman theologians, he is highly appreciated by scholarly clergy who, in charity, I believe don't have any idea what he is talking about. Because Teilhard's ideas are to a great extent plagiarisms from Vedanta and Tantra gummed together with Christian-sounding jargon and heavily painted with evolutionism. It would be ludicrous if it weren't that he is taken so seriously. Even so, Teilhard vehemently denies the value of Hinduism. But denial or no, Vedanta and Tantra continue to weave crazily through the fabric of his thought. From what I can gather, he was enthralled by certain Indian ideas which are (within Hinduism) seriously and rather nicely worked out. But they become a confusion when Teilhard works them over.

Let me quote one example from him: "The world I live in becomes divine. Yet these flames do not consume me, nor do these waters dissolve me; for, unlike the false forms of monism that impel us through passivity towards unconsciousness, the pan-Christism I am finding places union at the term of an arduous process of differentiation. I shall attain the spirit only by releasing completely and exhaustively all the powers of matter.... I recognize that, following the example of the incarnate God revealed to me by the Catholic faith, I can be saved only by becoming one with the universe." This is outright Hinduism; actually, it is philosophy stew. It has a little bit of everything in it — a recognizable sloka from an Upanishad and pieces from several of the philosophical systems along with their practices. But if what he says may be amusing, the effect that he is having certainly is not.

In a press-conference given by Father Arrupe, General of the Society of Jesus, in June of 1965, Teilhard de Chardin was defended on the grounds

that "he was not a professional theologian and philosopher, so that it was possible for him to be unaware of all the philosophical and theological implications attached to some of his intuitions." Then Father Arrupe praised him: "Pere Teilhard is one of the great masters of contemporary thought, and his success is not to be wondered at. He carried through, in fact, a great attempt to reconcile the world of science with the world of faith." The upshot of this reconciliation is a new religion. And in Teilhard's words: "The new religion will be exactly the same as our old Christianity but with a new life drawn from the legitimate evolution of its dogmas as they come in contact with new ideas." With this bit of background let us look at Vivekananda's Universal Religion and Teilhard's "New Christianity."

The Universal Religion as proposed by Vivekananda must have five characteristics. First, it must be scientific. It will be built on spiritual laws. Hence, it will be a true and scientific religion. "By Vedas," says Swami Vivekananda, "no books are meant. They mean the accumulated spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times." This is the Vedantic *reconciliation of science and faith.* In effect, both Vivekananda and Teilhard use theoretical scientism as an article of their faith.

Second, its foundation is evolution. Swami Vivekananda says: "Dvaita, Vishistadvaita and Advaita (i.e., dualism, qualified monism and monism) are but three phases or stages in a single development (or evolution), of which the last-named constitutes the goal." In Teilhard's words: "A hitherto unknown form of religion — one that no one could yet have imagined or described, for lack of a universe large enough and organic enough to contain it— is burgeoning in men's hearts, from a seed sown by the idea of evolution." And again: "Original sin... binds us hand and foot and drains the blood from us" because "as it is now expressed, it represents a survival of static concepts that are an anachronism in our evolutionist system of thought." Such a pseudo-religious concept of "evolution," which was consciously rejected by Christian thought, has been basic to Hindu thought for millenia. It is the sum and substance of karma, reincarnation and moksha (or the eventual at-onement with the Divine), and every religious practice assumes it.

Third, the Universal Religion will not be built around any particular personality, but will be founded on eternal principles. Teilhard is well on his way towards the impersonal God when he writes: "Christ is becoming more and more indispensable to me... but at the same time the figure of the historical Christ is becoming less and less substantial and distinct to me." "...My view of him is continually carrying him further and higher along the axis of

(I hope!) orthodoxy." Sad to say, this non-historical "Christ" spirit is Hindu orthodoxy, not Christian.

Fourth, the main purpose of the Universal Religion will be to satisfy the spiritual needs of men and women of diverse types. Individualistic, sectarian religions cannot offer this. Teilhard believed that Christianity did not fit everybody's religious aspirations. He records his discontent in these words: "If Christianity has nothing to offer us but a pig in a poke, we'll soon end by jettisoning the whole thing, Christianity and all. A truth that has no immediate effective reaction on life, has no existence or validity." And again: "Christianity is still to some extent a refuge, but it does not embrace, or satisfy or even lead the 'modern soul' any longer."

Fifth and final, within the Universal Religion (or New Christianity) we are all wending our way to the same destination. For Teilhard de Chardin it is the Omega Point, which belongs to something that is beyond representation. For Vivekananda it is the Om, the sacred syllable of the Hindus: "All humanity, converging at the foot of that sacred place where is set the symbol that is no symbol, the name that is beyond all sound."

Where will it end, this deformation of Christianity and triumph of Hinduism? Will we have the Om, or will we have the Omega?

——Editors' note: Let not the Orthodox reader indulge the wishful thought that all of this is the problem only of Roman Catholicism. Already the arch-ecumenists of the Orthodox Church have begun to ape the Latin modernists in looking toward a universal religious synthesis. And do even those who are not yet so radical, who still wish only to unite with the rest of "Christianity," have any realization of the meaning and implications of a "Common Chalice" with those whose Christianity, as honest and concerned Roman Catholics themselves now admit, is in a process of radical decomposition under the influence of Hindu and other pagan ideas? Some of these implications, together with the Orthodox understanding of the "Omega Point" which ecumenism relentlessly pursues, will be examined in the conclusion to this series of articles.

Next: Part III. A Fakir's "Miracle" and the Prayer of Jesus.

Starets Anatole the Younger

AND THE DESTRUCTION OF OPTINA MONASTERY

A condensed chapter from the forthcoming book
"Optina Monastery and its Era"

By I. M. KONTZEVITCH

Introductory Note. Optina Monastery, located in Central Russia, was revived in the early 19th century under the direct influence of disciples of the great Archimandrite Paisius Velichkovsky, and for the following century until its destruction by the Communists it flourished with its institution of *Startsi,* i.e., spiritual direction by special *Elders* who guided others (both monastics and laymen) out of the wisdom of their own spiritual experience, in full accord with the teaching and practice of the ancient Holy Fathers of Orthodox monasticism, as set forth in the basic patristic writings, which were the foundation of Russia's spiritual revival. After the death of Starets Paisius in Moldavia in 1794, many of his disciples returned to Russia and settled in various remote places. One group found refuge in the Roslavl forests, where they continued the Paisian tradition as desert-dwellers, being headed by Monk Athanasius. The latter brought with him many of the patristic translations of the Elder Paisius, which were studied and copied scrupulously by the monks. One of them, *Moses,* having inherited these writings, was invited to found a hermitage in a forest near Optina Monastery, where he, his brother Anthony, and two other monks arrived in 1821. When Moses became the abbot of Optina Monastery, the great Starets *Leonid* (*Lev* in Schema, †1841), a disciple of Paisius' companion, Starets *Theodore,* joined them in settling in the hermitage, and the tradition of Startsi was established. This in time drew to them the humble-minded and holy Elder *Macarius* (†1860), who had himself inherited the tradition of Paisius' translations from his own Elder. Macarius became the editor of the whole collection of these translations, which was now published in the Optina editions, and out of his own spiritual experience he added much to their presentation. These two great Startsi, Lev and Macarius, nurtured the great luminary, Starets *Ambrose* (†1891), who in turn gave rise to the last great holy Elders: Skete-superior *Anatole the Elder*

HIEROMONK ANATOLE POTAPOV

†1894), the great hesychast co-struggler of the Blessed Ambrose; Starets *Joseph* (†1911), whose sanctity was manifested by the radiance about him of the Uncreated Light; Archimandrite *Barsanuphius* (†1912), clairvoyant seer of the world of spirits; Blessed *Anatole the Younger* (†1922), the most beloved father confessor who was deemed worthy to receive Optina's first martyr's crown; and the wondrous dweller of another world, at times a fool for Christ, and the last of the Elders of Optina, the child-like confessor *Nectarius* (†1928).

The Lives of the Elder Paisius and the Startsi of Optina, and various texts of the Paisian-Optina tradition, will be presented in *The Orthodox Word* beginning in 1972.

OPTINA MONASTERY

(*Opposite page*)

Main Church of the Entrance of the Theotokos

The Startsi: top left, Archimandrite Barsanuphius; middle, Archimandrite Moses, Abbot; bottom, Starets Macarius and Starets Joseph.

Starets Ambrose

HAVING ARRIVED at Kozelsk, located not far from Optina Monastery, we walked across a beautiful meadow covered with a luxuriant green growth. It spread itself before us like a wonderful carpet that was adorned with varicolored flowers. And then, on a slope of a hill towering over the river Zhizdra, there it was: the Optina Monastery, that great monastic desert, our own Thebaid or Trans-Jordan... We came to the Zhizdra. There was a ferry-boat ready to take us across the river. And then with awe we stepped onto the soil of the holy monastery, where everything had been sanctified by the ascetic labors of the monks, with their tears and unceasing prayers. When we entered the monastery we were told that to see Starets Anatole we must go past the orchard and then out through the monastery gate, taking a little path through the thick pine forest that leads right up to the Skete. Finally we arrived and saw the Skete bell tower, and on the right of it a little hut where the great Startsi had lived. At last, in the depth of the Skete in a small cell [*see cover*], we saw Father Anatole, who received us with love. As we conversed with him his gift of clairvoyance was revealed to us. This first meeting with him remained in our memory for life..."* And indeed there was in the whole personality of Father Anatole something similar to the freshness of the sun-lit wildflowers, a youthfulness and quiet joy.

From his early years Alexander Potapov wanted eagerly to become a monk, but his mother did not wish it, even though he was not the only son in the family. Like St. Sergius of Radonezh, he went to the monastery only after her death, joining the Optina brotherhood, and for many years was the

* Memoirs of the Canadian Missionary, Archimandrite Amvrossy Kanavalov.

cell-attendant of the great Starets Ambrose, absorbing the spirit of his great master so well that while still only a hierodeacon he functioned already as a Starets, at first in the Skete and later as the main Starets in the Monastery itself, being revered and loved especially by the visitors and pilgrims from outside.

From his very first days in Optina he fully absorbed the spirit of its severe asceticism: the tense wakefulness of spirit, the being shut up in one's cell, which is that "cleft in the rock where the Lord spoke to Moses" (St. Isaac the Syrian); and on the other hand he fully partook of the simple and sincere attitude towards everything outward, towards his brethren, the visitors, nature, and the whole surrounding world of God. The Monastery's way of life in accordance with the Typicon, with its church services, its Elders, its spiritually rich work of enlightenment, nurtured in him a great ascetic. At night he did not sleep at all, giving himself fully over to the Jesus Prayer. Often from fatigue he would doze off in church during the reading of the Psalter, only to meet the criticizing eye of someone who did not know of his nightly labors. This inward activity, however, gave rise in him to that unshakable peace which enabled him, in full accord with all the Startsi who had preceded him, to become a great benefactor to the whole of society as well, educating the souls of thousands of Russian people in true Christian piety. It is quite significant that he should highly value St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, often presenting as a precious gift the Saint's book, *On True Christianity*. A half century later one of his spiritual sons recalled with awe: "In 1921, blessing me to pastoral work as a priest, Starets Anatole told me: 'Take *True Christianity* and *live* according to its directions.' "

Having appropriated the essence of monastic direction, Starets Anatole governed the inward life of the monks with full spiritual power. When, for example, during the monks' confessions twice a day, when they opened their thoughts to him, with deep reverence and concentration they would come up to the Starets one by one, kneel before him, take his blessing and exchange a few words with him, during which time his clairvoyance was often made evident. Some would be brief, others would take a bit longer. It was apparent that the Starets was acting with fatherly love and power. With quiet peace and a feeling of consolation they would withdraw, their soul cleansed anew. And indeed a monk's life in Optina was without a shadow of disturbance or grief; everyone there was deeply joyous in heartfelt concentration.

Father Anatole had a striking gift of seeing the movements of a man's soul, his thoughts and feelings: "In 1916 I was informed that Starets Anatole was expected in St. Petersburg and would stay at Mr. Usov's; and so three

of us, my brother, sister and I, went there. On the way my brother and sister both declared that all they actually needed from the Starets was his blessing, but I said that I would like very much to talk with him. After some time he came out into the vestibule to all the people who were waiting for him and began giving his blessing, saying a few words to each one individually. In appearance Father Anatole was very much like St. Seraphim as depicted on his icons: bent over, with a loving and humble face. One would have to see it for himself, for it is impossible to describe. When our turn came, the Starets blessed my brother and sister, but to me he said: 'But you wanted to talk to me, didn't you? Right now I can't; come to me in the evening.' The Elder read my fervent desire, although I had not expressed it in words."*

During his last years St. Anatole lived not far from the church, right opposite it within the monastery wall. The unrest in the people evoked by the revolutionary atheism led the faithful to the Elders — Anatole and Nectarius — for spiritual support. Father Anatole, although the younger of the two and not yet gray-haired, was the center of attention, Father Nectarius preferring to remain in the background. In his humility Starets Nectarius, when he saw visitors approaching his own cell, would go up to them and say, "Whom are you going to?" and he would lead them away to Father Anatole without their suspecting who he was.

The Soviet authorities began the persecution of monks throughout Russia. Optina became State property, and the godless State obviously had no use for a monastery. Thanks to the efforts of local lay believers, the monastery achieved the status of a State museum, with one church being allowed to function. The monks were terribly harrassed; some were arrested, and some just went away wherever they could go. But even more did the Orthodox faithful come, flocking the holy place in search of consolation.

Starets Anatole's turn finally came. Red Army soldiers arrested him several times, shaved him, tortured and mocked him. He suffered much, but he still received his spiritual children whenever he could. Towards evening on July 29th, 1922, a Soviet commission came, interrogated him for a long time, and was supposed to arrest him. But the Starets, without protesting, modestly begged a 24-hour delay in order to prepare himself. His cell-attendant, the hunchbacked Father Barnabas, was menacingly told to prepare the Elder for departure, as he would be taken away the next day; and with this they left.

Night came on and the Starets began to prepare himself for his journey. The following morning the commission returned. Leaving their cars, they

* Memoirs of Elena Kartsev (now Mrs. H. Kontzevitch).

asked the cell-attendant, "Is he ready?" "Yes," answered Fr. Barnabas, "the Starets is ready." And opening the door he led them to the Elder's quarters. Here a disconcerting picture presented itself to their astonished gaze: the Starets, having indeed "prepared himself," lay dead in his coffin in the middle of the room! The Lord had not allowed His faithful servant to be mocked any further, but had taken him to Himself that very night.

A few days before the Elder's repose, one of his spiritual daughters (E.G.R.) received a letter from him inviting her to come and stay at the Monastery for a while. She delayed in going, and she arrived only on the ninth day after his repose. There she met other people who had likewise been called by the Elder, either by letter or in a dream. One person received word through the Elder of his own repose several hours before it occurred. The body was buried next to the Starets Macarius, whose relics were then found incorrupt.

The next year, just before Easter, the Monastery was finally liquidated. All the remaining monks were arrested and banished, the churches sealed, the graves of the Startsi desecrated, and the Skete turned into a resort for the Soviet "upper class." Abbot Isaac and Starets Nectarius were imprisoned in Kozhelsk; but the latter was soon released and banished 50 miles away from the Monastery, where in the house of a devoted believer he lived until his death in 1928, thus ending the glorious Era of the Startsi of Optina.

In one of the many popular books about Optina Monastery that appeared just before the Revolution, *On the Banks of God's River,* is a touching description of a holy child, the five-year-old son of Fr. Anatole's spiritual daughter. When pregnant with him she fervently prayed to her beloved St. Sergius of Radonezh, promising to dedicate the child to him. However, while attending St. Seraphim's canonization in Sarov (1903), she felt the child leap in her womb, and she began to wonder whether she shouldn't name the child Seraphim instead; but because of a dream she named the child Sergius (Serezha) after all. Five years later, "when Vera and Serezha were leaving our monastery I went to see them off. At that very time I saw that one of our most respected old monks, Father A., was coming out to meet us. We approached him and bowed down to take his blessing. Serezha, putting his little hands forward, said, 'Bless me, Batushka.' Instead, the old monk himself bowed down low to Serezha, touching the ground with his hand, saying, 'No, you first bless me.' And to our astonishment the child put his fingers into the proper position and blessed the old monk with a priest's blessing. What does the future hold for this boy?" concluded the author.

And the answer to this question, as witnessed by N. V. Urusova a third of a century later, comes from *Holy Catacomb Russia*:

"When my sons were arrested in 1937 and banished by the GPU for ten years without right of correspondence, one can well imagine my sorrow. I shed many, many bitter tears, but not even in a single fleeting thought did I complain, but only sought consolation in church; and this could only be in the Catacomb Church, which I sought out everywhere, and by God's mercy I always found it very quickly; and I poured out my grief to the true God-pleasing priests who celebrated catacomb services. And so it was also when, after the arrest of my sons, I left Siberia for Moscow. My sister — who to my horror recognized the Soviet Church — had not been arrested, despite the fact that she had been a Lady-in-Waiting to the Empress. She directed me to a childhood friend of ours with whom she differed on church questions, since this friend was a fervent participant in catacomb services. This woman and other members of this holy catacomb Church greeted me with open arms.... I lived with my sister periodically and visited all the services, which took place in private houses in various parts of Moscow. There was a certain Father Anthony, an old hieromonk, who was our priest and spiritual father. I constantly heard him say: 'As the Starets commands, whatever the Starets says,' and the like.I asked Fr. Anthony where I might see this Starets in order to pour out my grief to him and receive comfort. Whenever he was mentioned it was with great reverence, and he was called an extraordinary holy man. 'No,' Fr. Anthony said, 'that's out of the question; I will tell him everything that you need from him.' In 1941 I became acquainted with a lady in Mozhaisk who had been banished from Moscow because of the arrest of her husband and her only daughter. She was also a member of the Catacomb Church and had been the spiritual daughter of this Starets from the very first years of his priesthood. She told me that the Starets (she didn't give his name) was staying now in a village two miles from Mozhaisk and that she secretly visited his services. To my question whether she couldn't ask him to receive me she replied: 'No, that isn't possible; all the faithful have been denied this, since the GPU has been looking for him for 25 years, and he travels over the whole of Russia from one place to another, being evidently informed by the Holy Spirit whenever it is necessary to go.' Of course I was saddened at this, but there was nothing I could do about it. The Feast of the Holy Trinity that year was on June 7. Just as nothing in life is due to chance, so was it now: I could not go to Moscow, and in sorrow I sat in my room alone on the eve of the Feast. And then I heard a light tapping at my window; I looked and was dumbfounded. An old nun was tapping, and she was dressed as a nun, in spite of the fact that it was strictly forbidden to wear such garb. It was towards evening. I opened the door and she came in to me with the words: 'The Starets, Father Seraphim,

invites you to come to him early tomorrow morning, and if you wish you can confess and receive the Holy Mysteries.' She showed me which road to take and told me to be careful. Before the village itself there was a rye field already in full ear, and she advised me to walk bent down. The back road through this field led right up to the hut where the Starets was staying, and right opposite, across the road, was the GPU station. One can imagine my feelings after the nun, so affable with her radiant face, left. She was called Mother N. There were two nuns with the Starets; the other one was called Mother V. They were always with him. The Starets would stay peacefully at one place for as long as two months or so, and then entirely unexpectedly, at any hour of the day or night, would suddenly say: 'Well, it's time to go!' And he and the nuns would put on rucksacks, which contained all the objects for church services, and immediately leave in any direction, until the Starets would stop and enter some hut or other, evidently by inspiration from Above.

"Early in the morning I set out, walking not on the street but, as had been indicated to me, on the dirt road which led to the back door. Before me was a wondrous monk, not at all old. I have no words to describe his holy appearance; the feeling of reverence before him can't be communicated. I received confession and it was wonderful. After the Divine service and my reception of the Holy Mysteries, he invited me to eat with him. Besides myself there were the lady I mentioned above, the two nuns, and another of his spiritual daughters who had come from Moscow. Oh, the mercy of God! I shall never forget the discourse of which he deemed me worthy, and which continued for several hours. Two days after this spiritual happiness which I experienced while visiting Father Seraphim, I found out from that lady that on the next day, while they were sitting at table, Father Seraphim stood up and said to the nuns: 'Well, it's time to go-' They instantly gathered themselves together and left, and within half an hour, no more, the GPU came looking for him; but the Lord had hidden him. Three months passed; the Germans were already in Mozhaisk when, suddenly, there was again a light tapping on the window, and the same Nun N. came in to me with the words: 'Father Seraphim is in the town of Borovsk (40 miles from Moscow), and he sent me to give you his blessing; and he ordered me to reveal to you that *he is the very Serezha before whom Father A. bowed down.*'"

The Era of Optina is past, the Monastery destroyed. But after such a revelation from the Catacombs of enslaved Russia, who can say that the tradition of Optina is dead? Who can even guess what further mysteries of the life of Holy Russia await God's time to be revealed to an unworthy world?

LIFE AFTER DEATH

(*Continued from page* 147)

For the course of two days the soul enjoys relative freedom and can visit places on earth which were dear to it; but on the third day it moves into other spheres. At this time it passes through legions of evil spirits which obstruct its path and accuse it of various sins, to which they themselves had tempted it. According to various revelations there are twenty such obstacles, the so-called "toll-houses,"* at each of which one or another form of sin is tested; after passing through one the soul comes upon the next one, and only after successfully passing through all of them can the soul continue its path without being immediately cast into gehenna. How terrible these demons and their toll-houses are may be seen in the fact that the Mother of God Herself, when informed by the Archangel Gabriel of Her approaching death, begged Her Son to deliver Her soul from these demons and, answering Her prayer, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself appeared from heaven to receive the soul of His Most Pure Mother and conduct it to heaven.**

Terrible indeed is the third day for the soul of the departed, and for this reason it especially needs prayers then for itself. Then, having successfully passed through the toll-houses and bowed down before God, the soul for the course of 37 more days visits the heavenly habitations and the abysses of hell, not knowing yet where it will remain, and only on the fortieth day is its place appointed until the Resurrection of the dead. Some souls find themselves in a condition of foretasting eternal joy and blessedness, and others in fear of the eternal tortures which will come in full after the Last Judgment. Until then changes are still possible in the condition of souls, especially through offering for them the Bloodless Sacrifice (commemoration at the Liturgy), and likewise by other prayers. How important commemoration at the Liturgy is may be seen in the following occurrence.

Before the uncovering of the relics of St. Theodosius of Chernigov (1896), the priest-monk (the renowned Starets Alexis of Goloseyevsky Hermitage, of the Kiev-Caves Lavra) who was conducting the re-vesting of the relics, becoming weary while sitting by the relics, dozed off and saw before him the Saint, who told him: "I thank you for laboring for me. I beg you also, when you will serve the Liturgy, to commemorate my parents" — and

* The most complete account of these "toll-houses" is contained in the Life of St. Basil the New, where there is the vision concerning St. Theodora's passing through them. (English translation in *Eternal Mysteries Beyond the Grave,* Jordanville, N.Y., 1970.)

** As depicted in Orthodox icons of the Dormition of the Mother of God.

he gave their names (Priest Nikita and Maria).* "How can you, O Saint, ask my prayers, when you yourself stand at the heavenly Throne and grant to people God's mercy," the priest-monk asked. "Yes, that is true," replied St. Theodosius, "but the offering at the Liturgy is more powerful than my prayer."

Therefore, panikhidas and prayer at home for the dead are beneficial for them; as are good deeds done in their memory, such as alms or contributions to the church. But especially beneficial for them is commemoration at the Divine Liturgy. There have been many appearances of the dead and other occurrences which confirm how beneficial is the commemoration of the dead. Many who died in repentance, but who were unable to manifest this while they were still alive, have been freed from tortures and have obtained repose. In the Church prayers are ever offered for the repose of the dead, and on the day of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, in the kneeling prayers at vespers, there is even a special petition "for those detained in hell." Every one of us who desires to manifest his love for the dead and give them real help, can do this best of all through prayer for them, and in particular by commemorating them at the Liturgy, when the particles which are cut out for the living and the dead are let fall into the Blood of the Lord with the words: "Wash away, O Lord, the sins of those here commemorated by Thy Precious Blood, by the prayers of Thy saints." We can do nothing better or greater for the dead than to pray for them, offering commemoration for them at the Liturgy. Of this they are always in need, and especially during those forty days when the soul of the deceased is proceeding on its path to the eternal habitations. The body feels nothing then: it does not see its close ones who have assembled, does not smell the fragrance of the flowers, does not hear the funeral orations. But the soul senses the prayers offered for it and is grateful to those who make them and is spiritually close to them.

O relatives and close ones of the dead! Do for them what is needful for them and what is within your power. Use your money not for outward adornment of the coffin and grave, but in order to help those in need, in memory of your close ones who have died, for churches, where prayers for them are offered. Show mercy to the dead, take care for their souls. Before us all stands that same path, and how we shall then wish that we would be remembered in prayer! Let us therefore be ourselves merciful to the dead.

* These names had been unknown before this vision. Several years after the canonization, St. Theodosius' own Book of Commemoration was found in the monastery where he had once been abbot, which confirmed these names and corroborated the vision.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

As soon as someone has reposed, immediately call or inform a priest, so he can read the "Prayers on the Departure of the Soul," which are appointed to be read over all Orthodox Christians after death. Try, if it be possible, to have the funeral in church and to have the Psalter read over the deceased until the funeral. The funeral need not be performed elaborately, but most definitely it should be complete, without abbreviations; think at this time not of yourself and your convenience, but of the deceased, with whom you are parting forever. If there are several of the deceased in church at the same time, don't refuse if it be proposed to serve the funeral for all together. It is better for a funeral to be served for two or more of the deceased at the same time, when the prayer of the close ones who have gathered will be all the more fervent, than for several funerals to be served in succession and the services, owing to lack of time and energy, abbreviated; because each word of prayer for the reposed is like a drop of water to a thirsty man. Most definitely arrange at once for the serving of the forty-day memorial, that is, daily commemoration at the Liturgy for the course of forty days. Usually, in churches where there are daily services, the deceased whose funerals have been served there are commemorated for forty days and longer. But if the funeral is in a church where there are no daily services, the relatives themselves should take care to order the forty-day memorial wherever there are daily services. It is likewise good to send contributions for commemoration to monasteries, as well as to Jerusalem, where there is constant prayer at the holy places. But the forty-day memorial must be begun immediately after death, when the soul is especially in need of help in prayer, and therefore one should begin commemoration in the nearest place where there are daily services.

Let us take care for those who have departed into the other world before us, in order to do for them all that we can, remembering that *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

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